

# **INDO-ANGLIAN LITERATURE**

**BY**

**K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR**

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K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

India is no exception in a world swayed by politics in an extraordinary measure. Her ruling passion is for freedom from foreign domination; in other countries politics revolves round other ideas and ideals, other hopes and aspirations. India has greater justification for being preoccupied with politics, for her servitude affects her indigenous culture on every plane. This has compelled, even a mystic like Gandhiji to experiment with truth in the field of politics.

Mainly because of this preoccupation Indians have undervalued the literary unfoldment of the last few years in the different linguistic areas ; if properly co-ordinated and helped, this would develop into a renaissance of the first order. Visions of literary creators enshrined in books of today are likely to become objective realities of tomorrow. Moreover, the mystical intimations of the poet, the psychological analyses of the novelist, the philosophical expositions of the essayist, the tendency portrayals and the character delineations of the dramatist—these are related to the very problems which engage the whole consciousness of the politician, the economist and the sociologist. India cannot afford to be neglectful of her literary movement of today.

India's many languages are not a curse, however much her enemies may call them so or her political and other reformers may wish for a *lingua franca*. Ideas unite people and rule the world ; not words. Europe is

not suffering because it has many languages, but because conflicting ideas and competing ideas have confused issues and have created chaos. Our many languages are channels of cultural enrichment. Many educated Indians are not familiar with the literary wealth of any Indian language other than their own. How many Bengalis know the beauties of Malayalam literature? How many Tamilians are familiar with the literary efforts of old and modern Assam? And so on. Again, India suffers grievously in the Occident, which is ignorant of the present-day literary achievements in the different Indian languages. No systematic attempt has been made to popularise the story of the Indian literatures or to present gems from their masterpieces to the general public in English translation. This is now being attempted by the Centre for India of the International P. E. N.

The plan of this series of books is a simple one. A volume is devoted to each of the main Indian languages. There will be about fifteen volumes in all, and they are to be published as far as possible in alphabetical order, which arrangement has been responsible for some delay in publishing the series. A list of these publications will be found elsewhere in this volume.

I must thank my colleagues of the P. E. N. Movement and several other friends who have helped with advice and valuable suggestions. And, of course, the P. E. N. All-India Centre and myself are greatly indebted to the friends who have undertaken to write the books which make up this series. Without their co-operation we could not have ventured on the project.

For me this is a labour of love. But time, energy and other contributions made bring their own recompense as all are offered on the altar of the Motherland, whose service of humanity will be greatly aided by the literary creations of her sons and daughters.

SOPHIA WADIA



## INTRODUCTION

Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar is too well-known a man of letters to need introduction to the Indian or English public. He has won his laurels by a number of publications excelling in taste, judgement and style of which his Critical Study of Lytton Strachey may be cited as a remarkable instance.

He has laid lovers of India and of English literature under a debt of gratitude by this small but charming and comprehensive survey of Indo-Anglian literature, by which is meant English literature by Indian authors. We have two types of literature motived by Indian culture: (i) the Indo-Anglian, of which the present work is a brilliant bird's-eye view, and (ii) the Anglo-Indian, by which is meant literature bearing on Indian topics or inspired by Indian motifs and spirit, and written by Englishmen or other Westerners. Sir Edwin Arnold is a leading figure in Anglo-Indian literature, as Tagore is in Indo-Anglian.

True literature, like all Art, is never imitation. It is the expression of one's own individual or racial personality. It is particular, and even peculiar, though interpretative of life on a universal scale. Indians who have won for themselves a luminous place in English literature have not been mechanical imitators of English models, nor have they dealt, excepting in a few occasional instances, with themes belonging to the heritage of Europe; though, when they did deal with

such themes, they imported into them Indian feeling and colour and invested them with a new aspect.

But mostly both the theme and the treatment have been suffused by the genius of our racial culture, while the medium of expression remained alien. Racial culture need not be recapitulatory of the dead past and revivalistic in objective. It may be reformist, critical and futurist, but the roots must lie in inwardness and the sap that sustains the outward growth must rise from our own depths.

The ignorance of Indians about things Indian is a proverb and a byword amongst the nations. In Economics and Politics, for instance, we know more about Western conditions, Western theories and Western developments than about Indian. In much the same way, we are more conversant with the racial literature of Englishmen than with English literature bearing on our themes, whether written by Indians or by Europeans. It is a blunder for our Universities to prescribe so largely, for the study of English, books in which both the language and the subject are foreign to our students. If the beauty of form is to be appreciated, there must be a natural understanding and sympathy with the theme of which it is the embodiment. Where both form and substance are strange and alien, a parrot-like imitation of the word and other external features may be possible, but true literary feeling may not be easy to acquire and with it impressive literary expression. Since 1918 it has been my object, in the spheres of such influence as I possessed from time to time, to get English literature on Indian themes prescribed in our schools

and colleges, so that the natural attraction of the theme may awaken in young minds and hearts a sense of style and a sensibility to the beauties of language. In the pursuit of such reform in the prescription of the text-books, Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar's book on Indo-Anglian literature will be of much use. And what a wealth of literature there has been in both these categories, the Indo-Anglian and the Anglo-Indian, which carry, as it were, on their very faces their natural appeal to our feelings! And how ignorant we have been as a general rule of all that wealth and variety! The short accounts given in this book of the different Indian writers in the English medium and the reading list appended will be an eye-opener, I am sure, to many an educated man, not merely in India but also in England. Indirectly it may help English libraries to make available for their readers books which will enable them to understand the spirit of India, of which Englishmen are so much more ignorant than we of their spirit. India by Indians is likely to be, generally speaking, a truer and more intimate picture of India than India by Europeans.

Indo-Anglian literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature. It is a part of it, a modern facet of that glory which, commencing from the Vedas, has continued to spread its mellow light, now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history, ever increasingly up to the present time of Tagore, Iqbal and Aurobindo Ghose, and bids fair to expand with our and our humanity's expanding future. There is an organic unity in our culture through all its growth and changes.

This correlation and membership as in one growing organism is most strikingly evidenced in the works of Rabindranath Tagore and other masters of the Indian Renaissance in Painting, Sculpture, Literature, Song, Dance and other Fine Arts. The soul of India transmigrates from one body to another but remains in essence the effulgent grace it has always been.

Mine is an introduction and not a critical review of this book. I am concerned with the general idea of the author, the great objective he has set himself to achieve. Readers will judge for themselves how far he has succeeded in the art of execution. In my opinion he has done it exceedingly well. None else, at all events, has done it better or so well. And that is enough claim for appreciation and popularity.

I am glad to learn that the author will soon be bringing out a more sumptuous and detailed publication on the same subject, entitled *The Indian Contribution to English Literature*. The present work may be regarded as a short introduction to the bigger one.

I close with congratulations to the author on this eye-opener and a fervent wish that he would give us as charming an introduction to Anglo-Indian literature at an early date.

C. R. REDDY

*Andhra University, Guntur.*

*18th January, 1943.*

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

When Shrimati Sophia Wadia asked me to prepare a brochure on Indo-Anglian literature, I hesitated a good deal before undertaking the task. I knew that, working in Belgaum, I could not gain access to books and journals indispensable for a work of this nature. Besides, accessible data on Indo-Anglian literature must in any case be very scanty. We have no directories, no bibliographies, no authoritative *Who's Who*; and there is no comprehensive survey of Indo-Anglian literature in existence. Under the circumstances, I have been compelled to work rather in the dark; now and then I was cynically reminded of T. S. Eliot's lines:—

I think we are in the rat's alley  
Where the dead men lost their bones.

I have tried, however, within the limited space allowed me, to survey as completely as possible the work of the Indo-Anglians during the past five or six decades.

I have used the compound "Indo-Anglian" in preference to "Anglo-Indian" and "Indo-English." The term "Anglo-Indian" should be used only with reference to the writings of Englishmen in India or on subjects relating to India. "Indo-English" is a suitable alternative to "Indo-Anglian," but the latter is more widely used in India.

I do not think I need apologise for dealing at length (comparatively speaking) with Tagore, even though

he is primarily a Bengali classic. Without him, I felt, Indo-Anglian literature would be considerably attenuated.

I have not tried to exhaust the subject. I am sure my ignorance has prevented my including many authors as important as, or even more important than, some of those mentioned in the following pages. In a subsequent edition, perhaps, I shall be privileged to rectify the many sins of omission and commission that I feel I cannot but have committed in writing this survey. Yet I hope that as a preliminary sketch of Indo-Anglian Literature my brochure will serve a useful purpose.

I have pleasure in thanking Shrimati Sophia Wadia for the active interest she has evinced in this work and for facilitating its completion in many ways. Portions of my brochure have already appeared as reviews or articles in papers like *The Indian P. E. N.*, *Good Books*, *The Mahratta* and *Federated India*; I gladly acknowledge my gratitude to their editors.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

*Belgaum.*

DEDICATED  
To  
SARDAR  
BASAWAPRABHU LAKHAMAGUDA, O. B. E.,  
Sir Desai of Vantmuri



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Editor's Foreword	i-iii
Introduction by Sir C. Ramalinga Reddy	v-viii
Author's Foreword	ix-x
Chapter I.—The Beginnings	3
Chapter II.—Renaissance Bengal	9
Chapter III.—Tagore and Sarojini Naidu	17
Chapter IV.—Poets and Professors	25
Chapter V.—Fiction and Drama	36
Chapter VI.—A Miscellany of Writers	48
Chapter VII.—Criticism	55
Chapter VIII.—Assessments and Anticipations	61
Suggested Reading List	65



## **INDO-ANGLIAN LITERATURE**



## Chapter I

### THE BEGINNINGS

The germs of Indo-Anglian literature may be discovered in the early days of English education in India. It is therefore desirable to preface this survey with a brief account of the beginnings of such education.

Ever since the consolidation of British rule in India, the Indian under British rule and the Englishman in India have alike had to face this question: Is India to adopt a wholly Westernized system of education with English as the medium of instruction, or is she merely to revive the study of Sanskrit and Persian and impart general instruction with the various regional languages as media? During the last decades of the eighteenth century, the representatives of the East India Company cared little or nothing for the education of the people. Presumably, the Governors of the Provinces and successive Governors General were aware of the appalling state of ignorance that prevailed then in India; but they were generally without any spontaneous interest in Hindu or Islamic culture, and hence they did not tackle boldly the problem of illiteracy among the masses. Occasionally, endowments were

made to indigenous institutions engaged in teaching Sanskrit and Persian. But these hardly touched even the fringe of the colossal problem.

Meanwhile the researches of Sir William Jones were attracting some attention and the Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded in 1784. Seven years later, Jonathan Duncan started the Sanskrit College at Benares. Still India drifted for fifty years more; neither Charles Grant's "Observations," nor Lord Moira's "Minute," nor the British Parliament's initiative in 1813, nor yet the formation of the Committee of Public Instruction in 1823, attempted any bold or far-reaching solution of the problem. Presently, three new factors emerged and the impetus of their interactions settled with unmistakable clarity the future course of education for Indians. These factors were, respectively, the new intellectualism among the Indians as symbolized by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the perseverance of the Christian missionaries, and, above all, the singular ability and metallic brilliance of Macaulay's prose style.

A select band of Indians headed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy had tasted the fruits of Western literature and culture at close quarters and they naturally contrasted the West at its best with the decadence of Indian civilization. They were seized by a spirit of intolerance and aggressive reform. They felt convinced that only through the consumption of prevalent obscurantisms in the fire of a new culture could a new civilization emerge in India, like the proverbial Phoenix from the ashes. They strongly advocated the introduction of a system of Western education with English as the medium of instruction. Ram Mohan found two unexpected allies

in David Hare and Edward Hyde East. The Calcutta Hindu College was soon inaugurated; but Bombay and Madras were rather slow to follow Calcutta's lead. The Christian missionaries in the meantime organized the Serampore College and other schools all over India, making available to the people Christian liberal education along Western lines.

And yet opposition to Western education was still very articulate, and it is not improbable that without the timely intervention of Macaulay, the Orientalists and the reactionaries might have carried the day and considerably altered the course of Indian educational progress. Macaulay intervened in the very nick of time. His now famous "Minute" urged that it was necessary and possible "to make natives of this country good English scholars and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed." Lord William Bentinck agreed with Macaulay, and on March 7, 1835, a new era in Indian education began.

Under the Macaulayan dispensation, education was to be imparted to a select few in the Government institutions. But it was expected that the young men who thus received education would return to their villages and confer the blessings of the new education on the masses. Thus from the higher and intellectual classes culture was to filter down—slowly, perhaps, but surely and inevitably by sheer gravitation—and in a decade or two the Utopia of mass education would be within sight. But these anticipations proved altogether illusory. The educated Indians made efficient teachers and patient clerks; some did remarkably well as administrators while others scintillated in the courts of justice.. There

were publicists, too, and platform orators, and now and then people were prone to believe that the country was being borne on the tide of eloquence to the haven of redemption. It seemed a hopeful prospect for the future of India.

But there was another side to the shield. The "filtration theory" did not work; the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. On the other hand, the newly educated Indian grew more and more into an absurd copy of his Western contemporary. His voice became "an echo, his life a quotation, his soul a brain and his free spirit a slave to things."\* The educated community evolved into a superior caste apart and speedily lost touch with the masses. The false culture—false because it was in disharmony with normal Indian categories of experience—learned at school and college made Indian youths hanker after the thrills of urban life and finally made them incredible anachronisms in their own once happy homes. A new generation conversed and corresponded in English. "Indianisms" and "Babuisms" were the order of the day. Is it any wonder that no healthy literary growth was possible on such uncongenial soil? The wit of the educated Indian seesawed between his mother-tongue and English and again between the Western and Oriental civilizations, and he threw up his hands in despair crying the while,

Wandering between two worlds; one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head.  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

---

\* S. Radhakrishnan.

Even so, many Indians quickly mastered the intricacies of the English language and made it a fit vehicle for the communication of ideas. Poetic composition was not possible—as yet; but letters, memoranda, monographs and translations in English appeared in due course. Presently, Indians boldly ventured into the domain of English journalism; they published political and economic pamphlets, partial portraits of men of importance, even occasional skits and short stories.

Subsequent educational experiments only widened the base of English education in India. As more and more Indians received instruction in English, the Indo-Anglian found his audience increasing; and this naturally encouraged him to write more frequently.

One other factor also inspired the Indo-Anglian to attempt self-expression in English. This was the meritorious work of the Anglo-Indian poets. Sir William Jones and John Leyden, Henry Derozio and Meredith Parker and David Lester Richardson, Sir Edwin Arnold and Sir Alfred Lyall, Trego Webb and Laurence Hope and William Waterfield were among the many Anglo-Indian administrators and Orientalists who derived their poetic inspiration from traditional Indian themes; and hence they added a new chapter to the story of English poetry. Indians who read the work of these poets were in turn inspired to try their own hands at poetic composition. Models there were in plenty—the achievements of the Anglo-Indians and the infinitely greater achievements of the Miltons and Wordsworths and Tennysons of classical English literature; but spiritual sustenance was yet lacking. The Indo-Anglians of one

hundred years ago were the creatures of a civilization arrested on the way; their past was a hazy thing of humiliations and frustrations, and their future was an intriguing and uncertain thing; they could sing neither in exultation at present happiness, nor of the glories of the immediate past, nor yet of the rosy hopes of the morrow; they could neither steal a song from the triumph of tradition nor force it through divine discontent. It was a spiritual "Waste Land," and the "hollow men" of the time could at best pray aloud for the life-giving rains of a new culture that should help them to re-discover their souls. And, after all, "if Winter comes, . . . can Spring be far behind?"



## Chapter II

### RENASCENT BENGAL

Bengal was the first to wake from this national stupor. The Dutts and the Ghoses quickly gained for Indo-Anglian literature a local habitation and a name. Bengali literature also was well set on its triumphant career. In art and letters, in politics and religion, renascent Bengal nobly led the way.

It is usual to begin surveys of Indo-Anglian poetry with Toru Dutt ; and, indeed, she is the first authentic Indo-Anglian. Her death when she was barely twenty-one years old was a severe blow to India.

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight  
And burnt in Apollo's laurel bough.

Her first work, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, was published in 1876 ; it is a collection of verse translations from the original French. A few of the translations were by Toru's sister, the only less talented Aru Dutt. One of the most satisfying pieces in the book is Aru's rendering of Victor Hugo's "Morning Serenade":—

Still barred thy doors !—the far east glows,  
The morning wind blows fresh and free,  
Should not the hour that wakes the rose  
Awaken also thee ? . . .

Apart we miss our nature's goal,  
 Why strive to cheat our destinies ?  
 Was not my love made for thy soul ?  
 Thy beauty for mine eyes ? . . .

These young translators are naturally enough more at home with the French romantic and Parnassian poets than with the classical writers of an earlier period ; and most of the renderings have not lost their freshness even today. Sir Edmund Gosse, who reviewed the work in *The Examiner*, was swept off his feet by this unusual book, and he declared : " If modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great number of poems from this Indian version . . . In short, her book . . . is an important landmark in the history of the progress of culture."

Toru's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* was published posthumously in 1882. This contained not merely the nine ballads into whose mould she poured her intense love of her country's past but also a few of her original English lyrics. " Lakshman," " Savitri," " Jogadhya Uma," " Dhruva" and the rest are very successful as narrative poems ; they retell those oft-told tales with marked ability and candour. But the shorter lyrics and sonnets are even more suggestive of Toru's powers. " Baugimaree," for instance, is a genuine work of verbal embroidery :—

And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls lean,  
 Red,—red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.  
 But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges  
 Of bamboos to the eastward, when the morn  
 Looks through their gaps, and white lotus changes  
 Into a cup of silver. One might swoon  
 Drunk with beauty then, or gaze and gaze  
 On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

Sixty years have passed since Toru's poems were first published, but their fragrance is not lost yet, nor is it ever likely to be. "This child of the green Valley of the Ganges," to quote Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, is likely to remain for ever "in the great fellowship of English poets."

In the year of *A Sheaf's* appearance there also appeared *The Dutt Family Album*, an interesting collection of English poems by the members of the Dutt family. Another member of the family, though in a collateral line, Shashichander Dutt, wrote some verses imitative of the English poets of the Romantic Revival. His brother, Romesh Chunder Dutt, was destined to make his mark as a man of letters no less than as an administrator and a historian. A member of the Indian Civil Service, he retired as Commissioner, and later distinguished himself in the service of the Gaekwar of Baroda. He wrote copiously in Bengali as well as in English. His *Lays of Ancient India*, effective as it undoubtedly is, need not detain us; but his English renderings of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* will remain for a long time to come the best introduction to our national epics in the English language. Romesh Chunder Dutt has reduced the 24,000 couplets of the original *Ramayana* and the 200,000 odd couplets of the *Mahabharata* to about 4,000 couplets written in the "Locksley Hall" metre. This he has accomplished not by condensing the original but by rendering only the most important portions and supplying the connecting links by means of concise prose narratives. "The advantage of this arrangement," says the translator, "is that, in the passages presented to the reader, it is the

poet who speaks to him, not the translator.... Not only are the incidents narrated in the same order as in the original, but they are told in the style of the poet as far as possible. Even the similes and metaphors and figures of speech are all or mostly adopted from the original."  
As a result, the versions as we have them are triumphs of condensation; and they have amply justified their inclusion in Dent's *Everyman's Library* of the world's best books.

Romesh Chunder was necessarily compelled to omit the innumerable episodes and digressions that contribute to the richness, variety and wide expanse of the originals; but even so the story of Satyavan and Savitri is retained. The metre chosen has proved an elastic medium in Romesh Chunder's hands; it recalls the even flow of the Sanskrit *anushubs* in which the major portion of the originals is told. It is not possible to give adequate extracts here to illustrate the translator's wonderful metrical resilience and mastery of phrase. We have evocations of scene as in :—

Morning dawned, and far they wandered, by their people  
loved and lost,  
Drove through grove and flowering woodland, rippling till  
and river crost,  
Crossed the sacred Vedasruti on their still unending way,  
Crossed the deep and rapid Gunti where the herds of cattle  
stray....

The appearance of Yama before Savitri is thus vividly described :—

In the bosom of the shadows rose a Vision dark and dread,  
Shape of gloom in inky garment and a crown was on his head;<sup>11</sup>  
Gleaming form of sable splendour, blood-red was his sparkling eye,  
And a fatal noose he carried, grim and godlike, dark and high.

Whether in portraiture or in dialogue, in description or exhortation, Romesh Chunder is highly successful; and hence the reader can derive a continuum of pleasure when reading aloud these English renderings of the Indian epics that "have been the cherished heritage of the Hindus for three thousand years" and "are to the present day interwoven with the thoughts and beliefs and moral ideas of a nation" numbering about four hundred millions.

Another name associated with Renascent Bengal is Michael Madhusudhan Dutt's, whose achievements in Bengali are greater even than in English. He had a chequered career, married an English lady, practised law for a time, and edited an English newspaper in Madras. His Byronic romance in English entitled *The Captive Lady* was merely love's labour lost; but his *Visions of the Past* contained one or two good things.

We now come to the talented Ghose brothers, Manmohan and Aurobindo. They went early to England and were quick to react to English culture and literature. Manmohan was associated in Oxford with Laurence Binyon, Arthur Cripps and Stephen Phillips; and in 1890 these four jointly published *Primavera*, a nosegay of exquisite poems. Manmohan later published *Love Songs and Elegies*; and these together with the posthumously issued *Songs of Love and Death* constitute Manmohan's legacy to Indo-Anglian poetry. Manmohan's muse, facile and clever as it was, never ceased to be imitative. As a poet, for all the grace of his effusions, he was rather a misfit; he could apparently rarely speak from the little kernel of his heart in absolute candour—the superimposed foreign culture would always

come breaking in. . But he was a successful and inspiring Professor of English in Calcutta and certainly he cannot be ignored by any historian of Indo-Anglian literature. He is described by the *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* as "the most remarkable of Indian poets who wrote in English"; and surely his *Orphic Mysteries* deserves to rank with the greatest achievements in Indo-Anglian poetry.

Manmohan's brother, Aurobindo Ghose, has had a more varied career and is happily with us still, living as a recluse in Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo has been many things in his life—scholar and professor, publicist and patriot, poet and philosopher, and is now a pilgrim of Eternity, a mystic. In poetry Aurobindo's successive volumes constitute a memorable record in verse of his own quests in different spheres of intellectual and spiritual activity. In *Ahana and Other Poems* and *Songs to Myrtilla* it is Aurobindo's sensitive adolescence that speaks, so precociously and so feelingly, of moments of elation and of despair, of the earth and its unseen visitants, and even of the strange thrills of melancholy. In lines like these Aurobindo's utterance is almost Keatsian in its sensuous imagery and haunting cadence:—

Love, a moment drop thy hands;  
Night within my soul expands.  
Veil thy beauties milk-rose fair  
In that dark and showering hair.  
Coral kisses ravish not  
When the soul is tinged with thought:  
Burning looks are then forbid.  
Let each shyly parted lid  
Hover like a settling dove  
O'er those deep blue wells of love...

Aurobindo's later volumes attempt a more deliberate fusion of English idiom with Hindu traditions and aspirations. *The Hero and the Nymph* is an excellent English rendering of Kalidasa's *Vikramorvashiyam*; *Perseus the Deliverer* is a blank-verse play in five acts; *Urvashi, Baji Prabhu* and *Love and Death* are all narrative poems, breathless in action and vivid in the delineation of character. Aurobindo's mastery of blank verse is something unusual in one whose mother-tongue is not English :—

He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed  
Descending, saw with floating hair arise  
The daughters of the sea in pale green light,  
A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,  
And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld  
A mute stupendous march of waters race  
To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.

In his more recent book, *Six Poems of Sri Aurobindo*, there is a further orientation ; the poet would now give expression to his deepest spiritual experiences in a medium that is an elastic compromise between the formlessness of free verse and the rigidity of traditional metrical patterns. These lines describe a mystic trance :—

My mind is awake in stirless trance,  
Hushed my heart, a burden of delight ;  
Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,  
Mute the body aureate with light.

Aurobindo's philosophy is elaborated in his serious studies on the *Gita*, in the philosophical treatise, *The Life Divine*, and in his other speculative contributions ;

in his poems he remains to the last a poet. His imagery is rarely obscure and his symbolism is no bar to our appreciation of his poems. His poetry is content to present ultimate Reality by direct vision and makes even the splendours of the life beyond mere concretions of our hopes and aspirations. The Vedantin himself, liberated in this world from the shell of self-forged *avidya*, does not shun the responsibilities of life but

acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives  
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession  
Infinity and the sempiternal  
All is his guide, and beloved, and refuge.



### Chapter III

#### TAGORE AND SAROJINI NAIDU

The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Rabindranath Tagore in 1913 is a major landmark in the history of Indo-Anglian literature. Though the honour was really won by Bengali literature, the Indo-Anglians, not unjustifiably perhaps, wished to share the great joy and pluck from it inspiration for creative work in the future. Even without the Nobel award, Tagore would have dominated the Bengali literary scene of the past fifty years or so. In Mr. Nagendranath Gupta's words, "For Rabindranath the Nobel Prize has served as an introduction to the West....for the rest, the Nobel Prize has been of no more use to him than his cast-off knighthood." In any case, the award gained for Rabindranath a world audience, and to satisfy it English renderings of practically all his works were published. Rabindranath's claim to be called the Poet-laureate of Asia could be no more questioned. *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon* and *Fruit-gathering*, and a score of volumes besides took the literary world by storm. The simple loveliness of his prose-poems, compound of day-dream and aspiration, fancy and prayerful ecstasy, naïveté and profundity,

became an irresistible thing in the world of letters. Tagore societies grew like mushrooms all over the country ; devoted treks to Santiniketan were the order of the day ; and the figure of the venerable poet, with the flowing beard and immaculate white garments, became to people all over the world a symbol of India's antiquity, of her reserves of poetry and of her living philosophy.

Some of Rabindranath's longer poems—*The Child* and *Urvashi*, for example—have not reached as many people as have his shorter song-offerings and inimitable musings. In *The Child* there is a vivid description of the pilgrimage of men and women of all kinds to the hypothetical shrine of fulfilment ; there is a ruthless enumeration of the categories of humanity of which the pilgrim horde is composed :

Men begin to gather from all quarters,  
from across the seas, the mountains and pathless wastes,  
They come from the valley of the Nile and the banks of the  
Ganges,  
from the snow-sunk uplands of Tibet,  
from high-walled cities of glittering towers,  
from the dense dark tangle of savage wildernesses.....

The trials on the way are unendurable to everyone except the Man of Faith ; he is therefore denounced as a false prophet by the others ; and his end is hastened by his own former followers, as in Ibsen's *Brand*. But none-the-less, thanks to the "old man from the East," the guilty company reaches the hallowed spot at dawn. The gate opens and the mother and the child are discovered :—

The sun's ray that was waiting at the door outside  
falls on the head of the child.  
The poet strikes his lute and sings out :  
"Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living."

On such a note of philosophical exaltation this extraordinary poem fitly ends. It is an efficacious antidote to the cynicism and scepticism of the age in which we are living. Of *Urvasi*, again, Mr. Gupta has given an exquisite English version; it is surely one of Rabindranath's greatest achievements, one that "scintillates and glitters like the Kohinoor in the poet's Golconda of flawless jewels."

Throughout his varied works, Rabindranath is poet, philosopher and thinker in one. In *Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore*, Mr. C. F. Andrews has brought together a collection of the musings, meditations and conclusions of the poet. The more one ponders over them, the more one comes to grips with the poet's inner soul. Indeed, Rabindranath's "thoughts" are like a pack of birds that fly and sing in full-throated ease near the horizon of universal knowledge. There is not a grand subject which is not grandly conceived and illuminated; there is not a nook or a corner that is not flooded with the light of the poet's mind. Love and Death, Religion and Faith, Egoism and Desire, all these are poetically vivified in a few simple, final words—words that are symbols and mysterious links suggesting and accomplishing the identity of Life and Letters.

From Tagore to Sarojini the transition is as significant as that from lofty grandeur to rapturous loveliness, from the Vedantic idealism of a philosopher to the ecstatic fervour of a devotee of love: yet both are children of renascent India, idealists and poets and patriots both. Of late the patriot in Sarojini Naidu has almost eclipsed the peerless poet of *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing*, published over

twenty-five years ago. With more of the lyric love and lyric instinct of Toru Dutt and less of the mystical longing of Tagore, Sarojini Naidu infused into her poetry the bird-like quality of song, at once piercing, melodious and even ephemeral. When her poems were published for the first time, England discovered through their fluid medium all the radiance of "the sun-scorched hills and plains of the Deccan" and heard the curiously alluring voices of Indian singers and weavers and fishermen and corn-grinders. It was Edmund Gosse who had advised her "to write no more about robins and skylarks...but to describe the flowers, the fruits, the trees, to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid populations of her own voluptuous and unfamiliar province; in other words, to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clever machine-made imitator of the English classics." Sarojini Naidu quickly consigned to the fire her immature imitative verses and presently wrote the authentic poems now included in her three published volumes. Indeed, when she sings of "rush-fringed rivers and river-fed streams," of a bulbul calling from the cassia-plume, of an ox-cart stumbling upon the rocks, and of the shepherd's pipe gathering his flock under the pipal-trees, and lastly of

A young Banjira driving her cattle  
Lifts up her voice as she glitters by  
In an ancient ballad of love and battle  
Set to the beat of a mystic tune,  
And the faint stars gleam in the eastern sky  
To herald a rising moon,

—why, we are certain that Sarojini is merely immortalizing in verse unforgettable Indian scenes.

In her later poems, like those entitled *Songs of Love and Death*, one finds, as Edmund Gosse found, that "the note of girlish ecstasy has passed and that of a graver music has taken its place." How marked is the difference between

Nay, no longer I may hold you,  
In my spirit's soft caresses,  
Nor like lotus-leaves enfold you  
In the tangles of my tresses,  
Fairy fancies, fly away,  
To the white cloud-wildernesses,  
Fly away!

with its all but Elizabethan naturalness and grace, and

Shatter her shining bracelets, break the string  
Threading the mystic marriage-beads that cling  
Loth to desert a sobbing throat so sweet,  
Unbind the golden anklets on her feet,  
Divest her of her azure veils and cloud  
Her living beauty in a living shroud....

with its load of anguish and its agonizing grandeur! Even thus does her "frail, serene, indomitable soul" seek to register its modulations in these her maturer poems. "Solitude," "The Gift of India," "The Illusion of Love," "Love Omnipotent" and "Love Transcendent" are all attempts at making "most audible the subtle murmurs of eternity."

Mahatma Gandhi once aptly described Sarojini Naidu as the Mira Bai of today. Like Mira, Mrs. Naidu broke through the walls of convention and courageously stood her ground; as Mira dedicated her life to the service of the Lord of Brindavan, Mrs. Naidu has consecrated her life to the service of her Motherland. Though her three published volumes of poetry constitute

already a unique trilogy of poetic promise and poetic achievement, it is yet a pity that she should have forsaken the flowery fields of poesy for the dry dust of politics. However, one cannot but admire the single-hearted devotion that affirms :—

One heart are we to love thee, O our Mother,  
One undivided, indivisible soul,  
Bound by one hope, one purpose, one devotion,  
Towards a great, divinely-destined goal !

Be what they may her unfulfilled possibilities as a poet, her actual output is considerable in quantity and much of it lovers of poetry will not willingly let die. Her pictures of nature's loveliness, her portraits in verse like "Wandering Singers," "The Palanquin-Bearers," "Bangle-Sellers" and "The Indian Gipsy," above all her daring peeps into the mystical whirlpool of the Unknown—these are certainly the work of a major poet. Well may we address this unparalleled singer of songs in her own so apposite words :—

Your name within a nation's prayer,  
Your music on a nation's tongue !

Many, indeed most, of the Indo-Anglian poets of the day are content to revolve round the Tagore-Sarojini axis. Tagore's prose-poems have been imitated by many an Indo-Anglian. Some of these imitations are merely prose run mad, formless and without purpose. But K. S. Venkataramani's *On the Sand-Dunes* is without question the genuine article. It is a string of reveries lamenting the general hurt that modern civilization inflicts on sensitive souls and plaintively hymning the frustrations and ambiguities of modern urban life. The

music of these reveries has usually a haunting, at times even an excruciating, quality :—

Fifteen years I withered and waned in school and college cells,  
bearing the smell of lime and mortar and of fleshy boys.  
Professors killed my soul, and text-books crushed the sweet  
and native glories of youth, and the yawning splendours  
of the sky and the meadow....

Build no more in brick and mortar. Dig no more into the  
bowels of the earth for silver and gold. Hoard no more the  
surplus food. Nor mint your soul into copper or gold that  
you may pass it on to sons unborn.

I am happy to be left alone on these sand-dunes cheered by  
the kiss of the truant wind, the chill embrace of the waves,  
the inscrutable lisp of the river, the strange music of the sea,  
and the broken light of the stars.

Not unreasonably, then, is Mr. Venkataramani called  
the Tagore of South India. More recently, P. R. Kaikini's  
*Songs of a Wanderer* has familiarized the public with his  
agonized meditations in poetic prose, often suffused with  
true poetic feeling.

Closely affiliated to Sarojini Naidu is her own brother,  
Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, who has already published  
several volumes of verse and verse-plays. *The Feast  
of Youth*, *The Perfume of Earth*, *Grey Clouds and White  
Showers*, *Ancient Wings* and a few others display a  
varied fare; but one cannot help feeling that there is a  
diffusion rather than a concretion of beauty and feeling  
in these exhibits. In result, he is a very unequal writer,  
though at his best he is almost the equal of Mrs. Naidu.  
Another indefatigable writer of verse is Dewan Bahadur  
K. S. Ramaswami Sastri; his *tour de force* in verse is a  
sequence of 365 sonnets, *A Year of Daily Devotion*,  
enshrining India's munificence of sight and sound.

Unfortunately, this has never been published in book form though many of the sonnets appeared serially some years ago in the columns of the now defunct *Hindu Message* of Srirangam.

There are also a number of philosophical poets on the fringes of Indo-Anglian literature. Sri Ananda Charya, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, Sadhu Vasvani and Swami Ram Tirth, J. Krishnamurti and Sri Purohit Swami have all given us English verse or impassioned prose either coining their own experiences or merely adapting the treasures of speculative and devotional lore in ancient Sanskrit. As might be expected, their work too is disappointingly uneven.



## Chapter IV

### POETS AND PROFESSORS

Why are there so few Professors of English who can blossom into beautiful verse? It is an intriguing question. But the fact stares us in the face that while professors are often sound scholars, they are hardly ever even tolerable poets. Perhaps they are so much engrossed in pulling poetry to pieces in their classes that in the course of a few years they almost become incapable of true poetic feeling and expression. The Matthew Arnolds, Lascelles Abercrombies and Edmund Blundens are merely the proverbial exceptions that prove the rule. It is a tragedy that poets are rarely to be found among those who have most to do with the teaching and the popularization of poetry. As for the Indo-Anglian professor, the world is too much with him in the shape of daily lectures, private tuitions and examinations. The dice are heavily loaded against his ever acquiring authentic poetic utterance. None-the-less, a few adventurous minds have braved the perils of poetic creation, and now and then have given us a few interesting exhibits.

In the story of Indo-Anglian poetry a place must certainly be found for the late Principal G. K. Chettur

of the Government College, Mangalore. His innate poetic sensibility was nurtured and patterned by the seeming other-world fragrance of Oxford. Its "enchantment" never failed to inspire and to inform his poetic muse. In the sonnet sequence, *Triumph of Love*, and in individual pieces like "Gumataraya," Chettur was able to harmonize Hindu processes of poetic experience with English nuances of verse expression. In the twenty-three sonnets of *Triumph of Love*, Chettur's chastened poetic fervour and disciplined art are equally in evidence; they sing memorably of love's perennial perplexities and exhilarations. To Chettur the eternal and spiritual aspects of love appeal more than its temporal and carnal attractions. There is a vital continuity in the cosmic process in spite of the apparent disintegration of material forms and human ties. Earth-love cannot be the end of all; something in the great beyond must prove the fulfilment of our earth-life. Love is not to be cabined and confined within the barriers of Time and Space. Love is rather a clue to the mystery of existence, an intimation of the Eternal life hereafter :—

Who that has lived and loved, and seen fair things,  
And striven with darkness beating into day,  
With spears dream-pointed, and climbed with wings  
Above the tumult of the lesser way,  
Shall speak hereafter slightly of God ?  
They that have known this brief infinity  
Are one with the immortals.

Chettur realized that, however intrinsically poetic one's perceptions, expression in an alien language will be possible only after an intimate study of its sound values

and verse forms ; and hence he was equally successful whether his theme was love or Nature, and he handled with equal dexterity the tripping stanza and the elaborate sonnet. In the pieces included in *The Temple Tank*, Chettur sang of slight and common things, but ever wove his fancy and reverie into fabrics of throbbing rhythm and word magic. "Beauty," for instance, with its galloping trochaics suggests the scintillating gaiety and rush of its meaning :—

Heart of maid ! here Beauty lingers :  
 Seek her gently, touch her fingers...  
 And now shall Love in beauty's guise  
 Fill your hearts with wild emprise.  
 Though she wander free as air,  
 Light as laughter everywhere,  
 She shall make her home with you.  
 Find you loyal, tender, true,  
 Bring you freedom, joy, and praise,  
 And crown with glory all your days.

In his last volume, *The Shadow of God*, Chettur's muse was distinguished by mellowness and serenity, by a finished craftsmanship. His premature death a few years ago was a distinct loss to Indo-Anglian literature.

Another remarkable professor-poet was Principal P. Seshadri of the Government College, Ajmere. For over thirty years Principal Seshadri taught English ; and he distinguished himself as an administrator and an organizer no less than as a teacher and a writer. His *Bilhana* is a free rendering in vigorous English verse of a Sanskrit tale of love and romance. His blank verse has both flexibility and strength. Though the theme has been treated also by Sir Edwin Arnold in his *Chaura Panchasika*, we do not feel that Seshadri's

*Bilhana* is superfluous. But, like many another poet unfolding in an academic atmosphere, Seshadri is at his best in his sonnets. Some of the pieces in *Champak Leaves* and *Vanishing Hours* are quite good. It is no doubt true that Seshadri seldom rises to sheer lyrical heights. The emotion is almost always tranquillized and subdued. On the contrary, it is unfair to belittle the appeal of a sonnet like "A Question":—

Which look of yours is graven on my breast ?  
 Is it the one, when, with that gentle smile  
 Of yours, you hailed me with a kindly zest  
 That evening ? Or when we drove awhile  
 Beyond the town, in neighbour forest-shades,  
 You wondered at the mighty wrecks of time  
 Scattered about those hallowed, silent shades ?  
 When bending on my latest book of rhyme  
 You wished to know each song ? Or, when that night,  
 The full orbed moon aglow upon your face,  
 You gazed with rapture from the terraced-height  
 Upon the Ganges draped in dazzling rays ?  
 Or when that morn you slowly said "farewell "  
 Struggling with varied thoughts which seemed to swell ?

Other sonnets, "A Hope," "An Hour," "Romesh Chunder Dutt," are almost as irresistible.

We have seen how in modern times Bengal has been the nursery of the Indian renaissance. The Dutts and Ghoses and Tagores set the pace which others have been eager to follow. Professors Shahid Suhrawardy and Humayun Kabir belong to this band of Bengalees to whom poetry is second nature and whose poetry is but a disturbing symptom of the renascent urge that is now all over India. Humayun Kabir is a Bengali like Chettur he spent his formative years at

Oxford ; he teaches philosophy and he is a nationalist politician and legislator. The single volume of poems he has so far given us consists mostly of English renderings of his own Bengali poems. Many of these poems are the inevitable radiations of the dawn of his adolescence ; but there is nowhere a false note, or any overdoing of effect. His emotional earnestness is no pose ; his longer poems like "Padma" and "Jahan Ara" are—a creditable thing among Indo-Anglians—consistently beautiful ; and the whole atmosphere of his *Poems* is pregnant with a sense of candid loveliness. Of his poetry one might write, in his own words :—

The melody shrined the silent magic of the night,  
Half-tones of joy and sorrow softened with dim surprise.

If the Indo-Anglian poet is a confused wanderer between two worlds, the Goan who would follow the profession of poetry is the victim of a confusion that is worse confounded. He is crossed and double-crossed on his emotional plane. Should he sing in Konkani or Marathi ? In Portuguese or English ? Often he knows all the four languages—but to what purpose ? And yet some few Goans have amply enriched the store of Indo-Anglian poetry ; and hence their achievement is the more meritorious. Joseph Furtado, for instance, occupies a very high place among Indo-Anglian chroniclers of Nature and of Man, and he has the singular capacity of looking at the baffling panorama of life with a wise passiveness. He has suffered, but his sufferings make him moan sweetly rather than shriek wildly. There is such a seeming artlessness and simplicity in his verses that one feels that he lisps in numbers because

they come almost unbidden. His self-portrait is at once a fine poem and a piece of critical divination :—

An untaught poet  
Of trees and birds,  
Whom no man knoweth,  
And, wanting words,  
But dreams and sings  
Of simple things.

“The Brahmin Girls,” “The Flight” and “The Maiden’s Prayer” are among the most typical of Furtado’s work. Like Furtado, Professor Armando Menezes of the Karnatak College, Dharwar, is a Goan ; like Furtado again, he mints moving poetry out of the sentiment of exile. Menezes indeed is that rare thing—an exceedingly successful teacher of English who is also a distinguished poet. In *The Fund* he has attempted a “mock-epic” with astonishing success. The portraits are vivid and the mock-epic similes are eminently enjoyable. Here is a fine specimen :—

And thus the talk went round, and whispers grew  
To clamours that assailed the careless blue :  
As when two urchins on a city street  
From harmless words advance to hands and feet,  
And plaudits from the circumstantial throng  
Inflame their rage and hearten them along,  
Till saloon-car, victoria and the tram  
Are all confounded in one terrific jam.

*The Emigrant*, for all its Prufrock-like poses of spiritual negation, is an honest attempt to probe the futilities of mere intellectualism; its touch is surer, its tone certainly severer, and its emotional background far clearer. But it is in his later volume, *Chords and Discords*, that Armando Menezes has risen to his full

stature. There are about forty pieces in all displaying a pleasing variety of theme and treatment, of temper and technique. We may explore with him, reciting "The Mighty Lover," the myriad things to love in this world; we may welcome "Protean Laughter" in these irresistible strains :—

Oh, come, auroral Laughter! Let your joyance  
 Dissolve the darkness of the Spirit's night;  
 Dispel the dusk of anger and annoyance  
 And pour your daylight like a deep delight.  
 Oh, come with tempest-pinion, sharp and sweet,  
 To loose the tangled roots of self-deceit;

we may share the vision that inspires the subtle elaborations of "Ode to Beauty" or meditate on the significances of "Tragedy in Four Acts" or "To a Fallen One"; or again we may wistfully dream of our own distant homes, chanting the while :—

How often, wearied with ungotten gold,  
 Have I, O Mother, dreamed and, dreaming, sighed  
 For the pure gold of thy sunsets and the tide  
 Of golden ricefields when the wind is bold!  
 How often, when sick hope has lost its hold,  
 Have I in thy green bosom yearned to hide—  
 Thou narrow haven from the world so wide,  
 Thou cosy shelter from a world so cold!

Armando Menezes has no use for the blandishments and shock-tactics of "modernist" poets; he rightly feels that "poetry is modern enough if it is just poetry"; he lays down the wise dictum that "the pain of a pariah today does not differ, qualitatively, from the pain of Prometheus"; and hence the poetry of Menezes is severely traditional and is "new" only because it comes

with a new note. The rhythms and words are the same, but none-the-less the utterance is distinctively that of a twentieth-century cultured Goan. Like his own "Poet," Armando Menezes sings "sitting alone upon the ruined heap" of this world, and we just overhear him and effect an intimate exchange of pulses that increases our awareness of him and of ourselves as well.

With other Indo-Anglian professor-poets we have necessarily to deal briefly. Principal N. V. Thadani has given us some exquisite renderings in English from the original Persian ; his two verse collections, *Krishna's Flute* and *Triumph of Delhi*, deserve to be widely read. Principal V. Saranathan's first volume, *First Sheaves*, contained some interesting pieces in a gnarled diction ; his more recent *Political Sonnets*, dealing with current European developments and India's reactions to them, reveals his idealistic fervour, but it is not very satisfying as poetry. The late T. B. Krishnaswami Mudaliar was an unequal poet ; so are Professors Uma Maheshwar and V. N. Bhushan. Uma Maheshwar's *The Feast of the Crystal Heart*, *Southern Idylls* and *Among the Silences* contain some good things ; his inveterate melancholy gives a uniform hue to his poetry and it is evident his poems are written only under the stress of some deep emotion. There are fine lines in his books but scarcely one completely flawless poem ; if only Uma Maheshwar will master the technique of prosody and the sound values of English words, he is certain to write as good poetry as was ever produced by the Indo-Anglians.

Professor Bhushan too lacks concentration and artistic restraint. His fecundity has been quite creditable, for

in the course of a decade he has given us seven slim volumes of verse, the latest being *Footfalls*; now and then he is really successful, as in :

A flower plucked  
Is a star disturbed ;  
A song-bird shot  
Is a soul in meshes caught. . . .  
God ! what hemmed-in nose-led  
Miserable life is the king's !

But, unfortunately for him, Bhushan has a fatal weakness for compound epithets, unusual phrases and unpleasant alliterative devices. "Susurous stream," "daedal danger," "pollinated pathways," "lustrous legendary life" and scores of similar cacophonies reduce the potent art of poetry to a vulgar trick. On the other hand, Bhushan's truly poetic temperament cannot be questioned; he achieves mastery of phrase as in "the hush and swell of the Camel-bells of quest" and "a wonder sense of sweet womanliness." Bhushan's latest poems read better—and hence will wear better—than his earlier productions; for, when all is said, the best of Bhushan's poetry comes to us like the monsoon, giving present joy and encouraging hopes for the future.

If space permitted, a few more professor-poets and their works might be noticed, but here we have to content ourselves with a bare enumeration of them: Professor Baldoon Dhingra's *Mountains and Symphony of Peace*; S. S. L. Chordia's *Chitor and Other Poems*; Menezes Fernandes' *Lustral Lays*; Chowdhary's *Songs from the Heights*; Prof. D. C. Datta's *Christmas 1935* and *Exegi Monumentum*; and B. L. Sahney's *Withered*.

*Flowers.* The cultured public will hear more and more of them in the future. There are others, again,—it would be invidious to name them here—who occasionally contribute promising pieces to the columns of various journals. But only the future can tell whether they will grow to be poets or remain merely poetical writers.

Space does not permit, to our regret, any detailed discussion of the work of Nagesh Vishwanath Pai, M. Krishnamuri, Manjeri S. Isvaran, Bharati Sarabhai, A. F. Khabardar, Jehangir Modi, R. B. Paymaster, Sir Nizamat Jung, Vasudeva Rao, Bhaskar, A. V. Krishnaswami, K. D. Sethna, Dilip Kumar Roy and several other irrepressible Indo-Anglians who do not belong to the teaching profession; their work has attracted the attention of the people that count; and their restless activity augurs well for the future of Indo-Anglian poetry.

But let us look at the other side of the medal. With the exception of the poets enumerated above, most Indo-Anglian versifiers (and their name is legion) are a deluded and self-frustrated body. To most of them the allocation of words in succeeding lines somehow or other seems to do duty for poetic composition. Rhythm, metre, rhyme, the fugitive beauties of cadence and verbal melody—these seem to be beyond the ken of many Indo-Anglians. Unable or unwilling to master the principles of English prosody, the Indo-Anglians either write inferior prose poems supposedly after the manner of Tagore or blindly jump into the chaos of free verse. Except for an occasional Tagore or Venkataramani, the practitioners of poetic prose are merely deceiving themselves and the public. The exponents of *vers libre*

are, of course, even more self-deluded ; their wit is all seesaw between rhyme and reason, and their productions are one vast antithesis. Indian writers of English verse would be well advised to keep away from the temptations of free verse and to learn the restraint rather than the multi-lingual gymnastics of Eliot and Ezra Pound. There will be time enough for these, perhaps, when our mastery of the English language, of its wiry shades of meaning and its haunting values of sound, is more complete and more unconscious. However intrinsically poetic one's sensibility, expression in a foreign language is possible only after a prolonged and intimate study of its sound values and verse forms. Indo-Anglian poetry, to be justified at all, must give us something which neither English poetry nor any of our own regional literatures can give. It must, in short, learn to effect a true marriage of Indian processes of poetic experience with English formulæ of verse expression. This is what Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu achieved ; and to achieve this should also be the aim of other Indo-Anglians. If what has already been done is an earnest of the future, one need not despair about the future of Indo-Anglian poetry.

## Chapter V

### FICTION AND DRAMA

In fiction the achievements of the Indo-Anglians have been rather scanty. Toru Dutt wrote her romance, *Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden*, while yet in her teens; it was posthumously published in *The Bengal Magazine* and attracted wide attention. Romesh Chunder Dutt wrote several historical and social novels in Bengali, and one of them, *The Lake of Palms*, is still read with pleasure in its English garb; it may be looked upon as the earliest important exhibit of Indo-Anglian fiction. It is a convincing portrayal of Indian domestic life about fifty years ago. "The Lake of Palms" is the name of a Bengali village in which many of the scenes are laid; but in it or out of it, the chief characters in the novel are unable to tear their minds away from the village. Bindhu, Uma and Kalee, Sarat, Sudha and Dhananjay are all vividly drawn; the social problem, the marriage of Sarat to the young widow Sudha, is skilfully but unobtrusively presented; village and town are both realistically brought to life; and the interplay of action and character is managed in a masterly way. Romesh Chunder's language too, whether in scenic description, in dialogue or in mere narration, proves quite adequate.

The late A. Madhaviah, besides giving a competent rendering in English prose of the *Ramayana*, also wrote an excellent novel entitled *Thillai Govindan*, with a typically South Indian setting; his *Pangu* is not so well known. B. R. Rajam Aiyar, who has the distinction of being the author of the finest Tamil novel *Kamalambal Charitram*, also wrote a novel in English called *Vasudeva Sastri or True Greatness*. It is included in his collection of philosophical essays, *Rambles in Vedanta*. In parts *Vasudeva Sastri* lacks verisimilitude; but it is an irresistible story, full of thought, vivacity and fun.

Then came Tagore's great novels, *Gora*, *The Wreck* and *The Home and the World*, though all these appeared originally in Bengali and hence belong, properly speaking, to that great literature. *Gora*, or Gourmohan, is a character that will endure; he is a symbol (though he is also realized beautifully in flesh and blood by the potent art of Tagore) of the 'best in renascent Bengal. He is more; he is a fusion of the West and the Orient, a fusion that is as convincingly real as it is an inspiration. In this and in his other novels, Tagore is philosopher and poet in one; and his novels are a composite testament of a poet-philosopher's ripe wisdom; they insinuate a way of life, but always by artistic implication rather than through vulgar reiteration and emphasis; and hence they are at once slices of life and lessons in deportment on life's scaffold.

As a short-story writer, again, Tagore has several notable achievements to his credit. Some of his best work in this genre is contained in *Hungry Stones and Other Stories* and *Mashi and Other Stories*. These stories may be appropriately described as Tagore's prose

lyrics in fiction. The story is always a minor thing ; but the emotional background and its core of spiritual purpose are vivified unerringly with a seeming artlessness. Tagore has plumbed the profundities of the human heart and has a true apprehension of the eternal feminine. In Mr. Ernest Rhys's words, "He (Tagore) is one of the very few tale-tellers who can interpret women by intuitive art. The devotion and heroism of the Hinduism he paints are of a kind to explain to us that though the mortal rite of *sati* is ended, the spirit that led to it is not at all extinct. It lives re-embodied in a thousand acts of sacrifice, and in many a delivering up of the creature-self, and its pride of life and womanly desire." Asha and Minnie and Kusum and Souravi and Bindhya Bhashini and several others are so many variations on the same theme of adorable womanhood ; such specimens of the "gentler" sex would certainly spiritualize the world of man, if only it would let them. Tagore has gauged their moral earnestness and realized them in art with poetic suggestiveness. How exquisitely his words hum and throb with significance, how they move and disturb and subdue us ! "Subha had no language, but she had a pair of large dark eyes with long-drawn eyelids, and her lips would tremble like tender leaves upon the slightest touch of emotion...." But Tagore could make their very silences nobly articulate ; "rooted and grounded in the love of all the loveliness of earth," Tagore succeeds in transmitting to his readers also something of this love and of this infectious sympathy for multifoliate Nature and "dear and dogged man."

Like Tagore, K. S. Venkataramani is a poet turned

novelist. In his important works, *Paper Boats*, *Murugan the Tiller*, *Kandan the Patriot* and *Jatadharan and Other Stories*, all written in an animated and often poetical style, Venkataramani is artist as well as prophet; and when occasionally the alliance is forced or incongruous, it is the latter that turns out to be the loser. Venkataramani's remedies may not be your remedies or mine; but his diagnosis of India's ills is substantially correct. The mere prophet is heard in his *The Next Rung*, in which what is implicit in his novels and short stories is made crystal clear; it contains, by the way, Venkataramani's vision of renascent India.

His earliest book, *Paper Boats*, a tantalizing mixture of description, reverie and portraiture, contained some excellent vignettes of South Indian village life, objective enough on the surface, but distantly plaintive in note that such a state of almost idyllic felicity should now be passing inexorably away. *Murugan the Tiller*, exquisite picture of life that it is, mirroring with relentlessness and finality the defeats and self-frustrations of Indian intellectuals, is incidentally an economic pamphlet. Ramu, its hero, is a sort of Gourmohan transplanted to Madras; his idealism and Murugan's stern earth-sense are offered as an antidote to the spiritual blight that has the modern intelligentsia in thrall. *Kandan the Patriot*, the only other novel that Venkataramani has written, is an achievement; its characters live, the political and human drama is vivid and dangerously perturbing, and its workmanship is worthy of all praise.

Kandan is Ramu of the earlier novel in his idealism, and they are both creatures of emotion and of memory. One might almost say that Kandan is Gandhiji himself

—twenty-five years old. There is “a magnet glow in his eyes, a purifying fire in his looks.” His mind is no engine of the intellect; it is a subtler thing, it waiteth “for the spark from Heaven.” The pangs of unrequited love have worked a miraculous change in this ex-I.C.S. probationer and his energy is now the sublimated will power consecrated at the altar of national service. Sarasvati is his counterpart; “there is awe and roll of thunder in her looks and the gleam of lightning in her eyes.” Rangan and Rajeswari, intellectuals both and both masters of the spoken word, are natural foils to Kandan and Sarasvati. Even the minor characters are clearly individualized. Thus sympathy is the key-note of characterization in Venkataramani’s novels and short stories. Of course, Venkataramani repeats himself in a certain sense; Kandan and Rangan have a sure spiritual kinship with Jatadharan, the central figure in two of Venkataramani’s short stories—and perhaps they are all partial projections of the author himself.

In all his works, once you strip them of their stylistic brilliance, their revelations of social distinction and their packed humans more sinned against than sinning, the political and economic thesis boils down to this : the town and its civilization are indubitably evil, and our redemption lies in returning to and rehabilitating the village. Venkataramani’s essential message seems to be : “Be faithful to the land, and the land will be faithful to you.” It is not a revolutionary message—even for the Western world. Indeed, it is even today the unconscious ruling principle of several mute inglorious Murugans and Kandans in the seven lakhs of Indian villages. Venkataramani is their Laureate.

"Shanker Ram" is the pseudonym of Mr. T. L. Natesan, author of a novel, *The Love of Dust*, and of two volumes of short stories, *The Children of the Kaveri* and *Creatures All*. He is, besides, a contributor to the Tamil Weekly, *Ananda Vikatan*, in which some of his best stories have appeared. He writes in English, Tamil and Telugu ; and he is a dramatist no less than a writer of fiction.

Shanker Ram's perennial theme is the Indian peasant, and his India is the unsophisticated India of the country-side, the real India. He knows the peasant through and through ; indeed, the peasant not only seems to have provided the theme but actually to have written the stories. The bareness of the language gives vividness and strength to these portraits of villagers. Shanker Ram has seized his characters in imaginative attention and portrayed them convincingly and unforgettable. There is never any attempt at fine writing. The simple, vigorous talk of the villagers is not rendered in slang but in plain, nervous and grammatical English that happily hits the mark and satisfies the reader.

Merely as an artist Shanker Ram would stand very high among the Indo-Anglian writers of fiction. He has an almost infallible sense of form that admits no loose ends into the framework of his stories. The element of surprise is always there, but Nature is never sacrificed. His tragic endings and happy endings equally seem inevitable. Pichai's death in "Is It a Crime to Ignore Another Faith?" is seen to be necessary, and so is Sooriah's ultimate triumph over his enemy in "The Madman's Hobby" ; the reconciliation between Achanna and Venkataswami seems as much an inspiring item of

predestination as that between Sivaramier and Venkata-ramier ; the death of Venkatachalam and the union of Velan and Valli both seem integral to the scheme of *The Love of Dust*. The trouble with many writers is that they will not let one off ; they will insist on telling one everything, however obvious it may be and however clearly one may know it oneself. Shanker Ram's artistic restraint is, therefore, a rare quality to be thankful for ; his silences are eloquent and often the very inarticulateness of his characters suggests infinities of thought and feeling.

Shanker Ram knows Daridrauarayana and can reveal the involutions of his thought and the very eddies of his soul. A character like Chola, so awful, so pathetic, so very human, reminds one of the portraits of the great Spanish painters or the characters in a Dostoevsky novel. Criminal or farmer or Kangani or boatman or tout, strip them of their professions or poses or protestations, and you will find them all human, "creatures all"; indeed, Shanker Ram would go further and equate men with even buffaloes like Buchanna and Ramanna and with the tiger in "The Rajali's Last Hunt" that dies resignedly and heroically in a supreme attempt to bring succour to his dying mate in the throes of parturition. The ache that is ever at the heart of all living creatures is the stuff out of which Shanker Ram creates his memorable and most moving stories.

The Chettur brothers, G. K. and S. K., are both clever short-story writers. *The Ghost City* contains ten stories by the late G. K. Chettur and they are all "astonishingly good." Every one of them is enjoyable. "It Means Luck" and "Fulfilment" describe the pranks of

astrologers and soothsayers ; "The Lucid Intervals" and "Mr. Dattatraya Pays" toy with hypnotism and the possibilities of hallucination and auto-suggestion. "Portrait of a Vegetarian" and "Pacheco's Story" are done after the manner of W. W. Jacobs ; and "Alarums and Excursions" is the *Odyssey* of Saundersen (alias Sundaresan) and Zulu (alias Somayajulu). S. K. is almost as rollickingly good a story-teller as his brother. His *Cobras of Dharmashewi* and *Bombay Murder* have been widely appreciated.

In the past few years Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan have published a few novels and short stories that have won recognition in India and abroad. Anand bids fair to be a tantalizing quick-change artist among the Indo-Anglians. He has written a book on Indian Art ; another entitled *Curries and Other Indian Dishes* ; four novels, *The Coolie*, *The Untouchable*, *The Village*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud* ; an autobiography, *An Indian Testament* ; and a number of arresting short stories ; he is also actively connected with the All-India Progressive Writers' Association and with the editing of its official Journal, *New Indian Literature*. Anand's sympathies are with the masses, with the under-dogs in Indian social life ; hence "the coolie" and "the untouchable" are to him symbolic of man's cruelty to man in unredeemed India. Many writers and publicists have waxed eloquent about the religious and social degradation of the untouchable, and also about his sore economic plight ; he has, in other words, been generally treated as a "problem," not as a human being with unique feelings and passions of his own. Anand, however, attempts to portray in Bakha, a North Indian sweeper,

an unforgettable and moving picture of a human being, vitally alive for all his drab surroundings and thwarted purposes. We are not merely allowed to watch the untouchable's daily round of duties and preoccupations but also to gain kinship with his very soul. In *The Village*, again, we are introduced to a set of peasants and to a village community in a state of disintegration ; Lulu, the central character, bravely rebels against the cramping conventions of his class, and when things are made too difficult for him in the village, joins the army ; his brother kills his wife's supposed lover, and is himself hanged. The villagers are a prey to a harrowing uncertainty, and pathetically look before and after. The complex cross-currents that agitate the average Indian village of today are well suggested by Anand ; and his picture is realistic but not too crudely naturalistic. In his stories and novels, Anand never seems to tire of reiterating the changes that are inevitably altering the structure of Indian society and leading to a happy reorganization or—who knows?—an unescapable collapse. But Anand is artist enough not to make his novels mere tools of propaganda ; his characters are recognizable human beings, not formulæ ; and his apprehension of the interplay of characters is neither partisan nor unusual, but essentially just.

Mr. R. K. Narayan is primarily an artist ; he has no axe to grind, directly or indirectly ; he is simply an engaging story teller. His first novel, *Swami and His Friends*, was a gay trifle ; it is a sort of "William" chronicle tuned to an Indian (specifically a Tamil) setting. But it does vivify the world of school-boys in a most agreeable way. *The Bachelor of Arts* is a more

mature work; it invokes a more variegated chain of character and incident, and its central character, the B. A., unusual as he is, is a fairly typical South Indian. The B. A. turning into a bogus Sadhu and successfully imposing on the credulity of the public is a bit of a fantasy; but it is enjoyable all the same. Narayan's third novel, *The Dark Room*, is a delicately executed Indian variation on Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. The haughty husband, the docile wife, the pretty children, these are typical of South India today. The husband has a liaison with the "ex-wife," working in his Insurance office; the wife rebels against this state of affairs and (like Nora) leaves her home. But she soon realizes that she is incapable of enjoying, or even braving the perils of, this new independence; hence she returns home after an interregnum of a day or two. And all's well that ends well.

Of other Indo-Anglian writers of fiction, special mention may be made of A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar who has given us two historical novels, *Baladitya* and *Three Men of Destiny*, and a number of stories; Santa Devi and Sita Devi who have published jointly *Tales of Bengal* and *The Garden Creeper*, while Sita Devi has independently published *The Cage of Gold*; Kumara Guru, whose *Life's Shadows* was published some time ago; Nagarajan, whose *Athawar House* drew a picture of South Indian social life with sympathy and candour. Similarly, Chintamani, Ahmed Ali and Raja Rao have published first novels of considerable promise. These writers, and others as yet appearing only in the columns of newspapers and magazines, indicate the restless activity of Indo-Anglian writers of fiction. Indian

history and social life in India are inexhaustible topics ; and if only the Indo-Anglians will deal with them veraciously and sympathetically, without any ulterior motives, they will be doing something very worth while.

The Indo-Anglians cannot be said to have achieved anything remarkable in drama. Of course, we have the fine poetic plays of Rabindranath Tagore—*Chitra*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Post Office*, and the rest. But they are shot through and through with symbolism, and while we hear words spoken by people seemingly human, obviously more is meant than meets the ear, and more is to be apprehended than meets the eye. These great plays are adventures in ideas, and are concretions of an ineffable other-worldliness. They are one and all the creations of a poet's transcendent vision, not of a dramatist's searching sense of actuality. Tagore's plays are rather like some of the dream-plays of Hauptmann, Maeterlinck, and Strindberg where "action," if any, takes place only in the theatre of the human soul.

As for drama proper, A. S. P. Ayyar has published one or two not very satisfying playlets ; V. V. Srinivasa Iyengar, an ex-High Court Judge, has published a collection of his plays and farces entitled *Dramatic Divertissements*, and some of them, "Vichu's Wife" and "The Surgeon-General's Prescription" for example, are quite enjoyable ; Fyzee-Rahamin's *Daughter of Ind* has been successfully staged in London and in India, and besides it reads well ; Suryadutt J. Bhatt's *The Trial Celestial*, notwithstanding its ultra-rationalistic bias and political preoccupations, is quite an interesting play ; Prof. Armando Menezes' *Caste, A Social Comedy*

is a competent study, while Nicolau J. de Menezes' *The Son of Man* is a creditable dramatization of the life of the Christ; Bhushan's playlets, *Anklet Bells*, *Samyukta*, *Ear Rings* and *Mortal Coils* are interesting pieces, though somewhat uneven; and, no doubt, there are many other budding dramatists of whose work the cultured public will hear more. But it is useless to pretend that Indo-Anglian drama has reached anything more than the purely fumbling and experimental stage.



## Chapter VI

### A MISCELLANY OF WRITERS

As in drama, the Indo-Anglians have no outstanding achievements to their credit in biography. We have no Boswell, no Lockhart, no Lytton Strachey. The best work in this field is Sir R. P. Masani's recently published life of Dadabhai Naoroji. It is a human document of the first importance; Sir Rustom has accomplished a difficult work conscientiously and thoroughly; and his sumptuous volume is as readable and enjoyable as it is informative and instructive. The rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri's lectures on the life of Gopal Krishna Gokhale make another valuable biographical study; besides re-creating the life and times of the great liberal leader and founder of the Servants of India Society, these lectures indicate with matchless lucidity and clarity the quiet virtues of Liberality in the affairs of men and of nations. P. C. Ray's biography of C. R. Das is, within limits, a useful book; so are Kartar Singh's life of Guru Govind Singh, Pandit Kunzru's life of G. K. Deodhar, and Sardar Panikkar's biographies of Gulap Singh and of the late Maharaja of Bikaner. Of course, many biographies of eminent Indians have appeared from time to time; but these are merely

hurried collections of speeches and other easily accessible documents, together with haphazard compilations of important events in the heroes' lives. The brief biographies of eminent "Christians," "Mussal-mans," "Parsees," "Scientists," and so forth, issued in more or less stereotyped fashion by Messrs. G. A. Natesan and Company of Madras, are better digested and more reliable than the general run of "biographies" in the market. But it is impossible to claim for them any literary quality.

But several Indo-Anglians have published intelligent "sketches" of princes, politicians and the rest, in somewhat the manner of A. G. Gardiner, Hannen Swaffer, Philip Guedalla, Ernest Raymond and Harold Laski. Special mention may be made of K. Iswar Dutt's *Sparks and Fumes*, K. Chandrasekharan's *Persons and Personalities* and Subba Rao's *Men in the Limelight*; individual sketches by A. D. Mani have appeared in *The Sunday Times*; V. V. Srinivasa Iyengar's appreciations of Dr. V. Swaminatha Aiyar, P. Sambandam and G. C. V. Srinivasachari, "the Indian Garrick," appeared several years ago in *The Everyman's Review*; the present writer also has published a few sketches which have appeared in *The Hindu Illustrated Weekly*, *The Scholar*, *The Mahratta* and other papers. Professor P. A. Wadia's *Mahatma Gandhi*, on the other hand, is a unique study of India's greatest man; Professor Wadia attempts to portray Gandhiji's many-sided personality and the violent passions it has aroused by the simple expedient of making four different mythical characters participate in a debate on the subject. This book has justifiably become a best-seller.

While in Biography our achievements have been meagre, in Autobiography we have several interesting, and some outstanding, examples. Mahatma Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth*, translated from the original Gujarati by the late Mahadeo Desai, is by far the most important. Gandhiji's transparent sincerity and abiding sense of humour are evident on every page of his autobiography. He hides nothing; he spares none, least of all himself; he has no axe to grind. Aptly he has said: "Writing it is itself one of the experiments with truth." His confessions are quite disarming, and it requires no effort on our part to believe him implicitly. He writes, moreover, with uniform restraint; he never gets heated about anything. Every aspect of his life receives the same dispassionate, yet convincing, treatment; whether he is describing his school life, or giving an account of the attempt to "lynch" him in South Africa, or discoursing on the ideals and practices of non-violence or *brahmacharya*, the narrative proceeds at an unruffled pace. Whether as a record of righteous adventure, as a moral tract, or simply as a model of pellucid writing, *My Experiments with Truth* is a vastly important work, than which nothing greater has been done in this particular genre.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography* is another outstanding work, which has become a best-seller in England and in India in an incredibly short time. The causes of its popularity are not difficult to enumerate: it is the work of one of India's foremost leaders, one who is often identified with Renascent India itself in the throes of a rebirth; it is a fairly accurate picture of Indian politics during the past twenty years, snappish

from the vantage-ground of one whom we might call a popular extremist politician ; and, above all, it is a very readable book, fresh and conversational in tone, faultless and unlaboured in its idiom. The book's transparent sincerity and honesty lift the veil from a personality which, however proud and prominent in the public eye, is palpitatingly human to the core. Like a true autobiographer, Pandit Nehru aims merely at laying bare "the facts of the case" about himself and not at making out a case for himself. When he writes about his own feelings and the results of his own introspections, there is just that combination of self-control and self-knowledge out of which great autobiography is made :—

It was true that I had achieved, almost accidentally as it were, an unusual degree of popularity with the masses; I was appreciated by the intelligentsia; and to young men and women I was a bit of a hero, and a halo of romance seemed to surround me in their eyes....

Only a saint, perhaps, or an inhuman monster could survive all this, unscathed and unaffected, and I can place myself in neither of these categories. It went to my head, intoxicated me a little, and gave me confidence and strength. I became just a little bit autocratic in my ways, just a shade dictatorial.... Why indeed was I popular ?

Not because of intellectual attainments, for they were not extraordinary, and in any event, they do not make for popularity. Not because of so-called sacrifices, for it is patent that hundreds and thousands in our own day in India have suffered infinitely more, even to the point of the last sacrifice. My reputation as a hero is entirely a bogus one....

When a man can write such a piece of limpid self-analysis, he is indeed capable of anything in the field of autobiography ; and Nehru's *Autobiography* is genuine throughout.

Subhas Chandra Bose's autobiography entitled *An Indian Pilgrim* bids fair to prove as unqualified a success as Pandit Nehru's. Other full-length or partial autobiographies have been given by Sir P. C. Ray, the late Sir Surendranath Bannerjee, the late G. K. Chettur (*The Last Enchantment*), A. S. P. Ayyar (*An Indian in Western Europe*), D. F. Karaka (*I Go West*) and S. Natarajan (*West of Suez*). All these are entertainingly written and are worthy of a place on one's book-shelves.

We have also an imposing array of Indo-Anglian journalists. About fifty years ago *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *The Hindu*, and a little later *The Leader* and *The Bombay Chronicle*, established themselves and were acknowledged as cultural agencies; all efficiently edited and controlled by far-seeing and capable Indians. *The Hindustan Review*, *The Modern Review*, *The Indian Review* and, in more recent times, *Triveni*, *The Twentieth Century*, *The Aryan Path* and *The New Review* have all been doing excellent work. Among great editors and journalists special mention may be made of G. Subramanya Ayyar, Kasturiranga Iyengar, Ramananda Chatterjee, Sachchidananda Sinha, K. C. Roy, C. Y. Chintamani, K. Natarajan, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, Lala Lajpat Rai, S. A. Brelvi, Pothan Joseph, C. S. Ranga Aiyar, G. V. Krupanidhi, K. Iswar Dutt, and N. C. Kelkar. Journalism is still in a bad way in India; but when we are able to produce papers like *The Hindu*, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *The Leader*, and magazines like *The Modern Review*, *The Aryan Path* and *The New Review*, there is no reason why we should be unable, in the near future, to quadruple the number of such high-class newspapers and magazines.

In philosophy and religion, excellent books and studies have been published, among others by Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, M. Rangachari, Brajendranath Seal, B. R. Rajam Iyer, K. T. Telang, and, in our own times, by Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Sophia Wadia, Sir R. P. Masani, D. S. Sarma, and M. Hiri-yanna. Among writers on politics and historians, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Professor Radhakumud Mookerji, Rao Bahadur K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir P. S. Siva-swami Aiyar, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Sardar K. M. Panikkar and Dr. Zacharias stand prominent.

The humorous essay, the light sketch and the "skit" have only comparatively recently come into prominence. Among the practitioners of this elusive art of exploiting the fake personality, the first place should be unhesitatingly given to "S. V. V." till recently one of the star contributors to *The Hindu*. His earliest essays appeared in the now defunct *Everyman's Review*, edited over a decade ago with so much distinction by V. V. Srinivasa Iyengar. "S. V. V." has now collected his essays in the volumes entitled *Soap Bubbles*, *More Soap Bubbles*, *The Holiday Trip* and *Chaff and Grain*. These sketches and skits used to hold thousands of "S. V. V." fans in animated suspense. "Don't Meddle with Coffee," "In Search of a Bridegroom," "An Elephant's Creed in Court" and "Buttons" used to be quoted and discussed and dissected, and their author became in time an institution. Easy, charming, indulgent, generous; now and then, a caricaturist's stroke; and now and again, care-free bursts of good humour; never vulgar, never fantastic,

never dull: this was the "S. V. V." that found a place in the hearts of the readers of *The Hindu*.

Mr. K. Iswar Dutt's *And All That* is an enjoyable collection of light essays. In the heyday of *The Merry Magazine* and *My Magazine*, many good skits were published by R. Bangaruswami, A. T. Macnaughton Thomas, and several others. Bangaruswami's hilarious *Misleading Cases*, *Unreported Conferences*, *Law of the Jungle*, *Dummi's Fortnightly Diary* and *Balu and His Friends* are all drenched in gaiety and used to delight the readers of *My Magazine* all over India. A specimen of Bangaruswami's infectious humour is his miniature "Pseudo-Philosophy":—

What am I? An automation with winking eyes, moving limbs, and a talking tongue? When I put on my short coat and cover my head with fur, when I slip out of my dress and wriggle into it, somehow (I know not why) the feeling comes to me that only an automaton will ever do such a thing. But, then, does an automaton sniff and sneeze at the smell of snuff? Does an automaton feed on beauty and—make love to women? Does an automaton relish pickles and potatoes, pumpkins and pomegranates? These are very serious questions and I care not to answer them now.

Perhaps, I am not an automaton. Perhaps! If so what else am I? A spark of infinity? Certainly not. A spark is never cold. And how often have I felt cold—have been cold....Says somebody—I am Cosmic Consciousness. Good God! I may be—by your courtesy—cosmic conscience; I may even be consciously and conscientiously comical. But....

I am not a dream. I am not a vision. I am not everything. I am not nothing. I am not kinetic; neither am I static. I am neither an angel nor a bird nor a beast.

I am I. I am myself alone!

## Chapter VII

### CRITICISM

Literary criticism by the Indo-Anglians has been scanty. After all, it is harder to be a critic of a foreign literature than to produce original work in a foreign language. Literary criticism, produced by the Indo-Anglians is almost unescapably derivative and imitative ; and, naturally enough, criticism of metre and idiom is the most difficult of all. An Indo-Anglian who wishes to pursue the slippery and dangerous, yet none-the-less seemingly easy, profession of literary criticism has to distinguish in his mind the various categories current in critical literature by diligent reading of good models from Aristotle to Sidney and from Johnson to T. S. Eliot ; only when this laborious process—which might take several years even for persons of sensitive memory—is complete, can the aspiring critic apply those categories to a given work of literature. Under such conditions of composition, much of the criticism that is produced will sound conventional and stale, as if it were no more than laborious pouring of soapy water into ready-made moulds. On reading criticism of this type, one has the uncomfortable feeling that the matter has not been properly assimilated and that while there is

derivative criticism in plenty, there are very few passages indeed of direct, strong and personal thinking.

Here, as elsewhere, we should have expected the many professors of English in the various Colleges and Universities to engage in judicious literary criticism. That is, unfortunately, neither here nor there. Our professors have either no opportunity or no inclination for this kind of work. Even those who are obliged to do some original critical work before obtaining their Doctor's degree more often than not relapse into somnolent inactivity afterwards. This is due to an understandable feeling of defeatism, that the best they can do in this field is bound to look insignificant, and even puerile, by the side of the works of criticism that are being produced in the English Universities. Silence is better than making an ass of oneself—decidedly; and yet one hopes that there will be less of this timidity and inaction in the future.

Notwithstanding the perils of literary criticism and the bleak prospect before critics, a few Indo-Anglian professors have (perhaps with more valour than discretion—but one hopes not) given us some interesting studies and essays in criticism. No more than a bare enumeration of the more important works is here possible: we have Dr. N. K. Siddhanta's *The Heroic Age in India*; Prof. P. K. Guha's *Tragic Relief* and *On Two Problems of Shakespeare*; Pandit Amaranatha Jha's *Shakespearean Comedy and Other Studies*; Dr. U. C. Nag's *The English Theatre of the Romantic Revival*; Prof. V. K. Ayappan Pillai's *Shakespeare Criticism* and his lectures on *The Song of Roland* and *Fables and Fabulists*; Dr. Y. K. Yajnik's *The Indian Theatre*; Dr.

S. C. Sen Gupta's *The Art of Bernard Shaw*; Prof. H. K. Banerji's *Henry Fielding: His Life and Works*; Dr. G. Kar's *Thoughts on the Mediæval Lyric*; Prof. K. K. Mehrotra's *Horace Walpole and the English Novel*; the present writer's *Lytton Strachey: A Critical Study*; Amiyakumar Sen's *Studies in Shelley*; Mohinimohan Bhattacharji's *Platonic Ideas in Spenser*; Prof. P. R. Krishnaswami's articles on Thackeray in *The Cornhill Magazine*; Principal P. Seshadri's monograph on the Anglo-Indian poet, John Leyden, and his lecture on Anglo-Indian poetry; Prof. Humayun Kabir's *Poetry, Monads and Society*; Bal S. Mardhekar's *Arts and Man*, which outlines an altogether new aesthetic; *Essays and Studies* by the members of the English Association, (U. P. Branch); Dr. Ranjee Shahnai's *Shakespeare through Eastern Eyes*; Dr. A. C. Bose's stimulating essay in *The Prabuddha Bharata* on "Art and Morality"; Principal V. K. Gokak's appreciation of D. R. Bendre's poetry; and Prof. Armando Menezes' appreciation of Indo-Portuguese and Indo-Anglian poetry in the essay entitled, "A Peep at Our Parnassus." This list does not, of course, pretend to be exhaustive.

There have been those, not specifically belonging to the teaching profession, who have also done some very creditable work in criticism. Tagore's essay on the inner meaning of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* has been translated into English by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, and is surely a notable example of literary criticism. Mr. Nagendranath Gupta's *The Place of Man and Other Essays* contains some thoughtful criticism, including a brilliant appreciation of Tagore. Mr. M. Chalapati Rao's essays on John Masefield, Mr. Subba Rao's *Yenki Songs*,

and *Modernists*, *Imagists* and *Futurists* scintillate with memorable epigrams and convincing assessments. And Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon's study of Laughter is a useful addition to the growing literature of criticism.

One other outstanding critic should be mentioned here—Aurobindo Ghose. In his best work he gives us not so much criticism as the poetry and the philosophy of criticism. The series of thirty-one articles that he contributed to *Arya* on the "Future Poetry" constitutes a most interesting, informative and prophetic work of literary criticism. He firmly believes that the future poetry will inevitably partake of the nature of the *mantra*, voicing "a supreme harmony of five eternal powers, Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit." Aurobindo Ghose's monographs on Heraclitus and Kalidasa are also penetrating critical essays. Finally, his scholarly and thought-provoking essay on "Quantitative Metre" is a valuable addition to the comparatively meagre literature on the subject in English.

In recent years, critical studies have been published in larger numbers by the Indo-Anglians. This is partly due to the institution of Doctorate degrees in almost all Indian Universities. Further, since almost every University is now running a "research" journal of its own, there is a greater demand for serious critical studies than formerly. Anyhow, some of the recently published works of criticism by Indian scholars have won recognition even in England. Dr. C. Narayana Menon's *Shakespeare Criticism: A Study in Synthesis*, for instance, is that unusual thing—an original book on Shakespeare that is scholarly, sane and stimulating at the same time; in it Dr. Menon's heart is as active as his head,

and hence he is able to produce a convincing impression of his intelligent reaction to the multiverses of Shakespearean drama. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty's *The Dynasts and the Post-War Age in Poetry: A Study in Modern Ideas* is another valuable work of criticism, published only a few years ago. Dr. Chakravarty's thesis is that "the dominant problem in modern poetry, both as a subjective concern and as revealed in its manner of expression, is the problem of self-consciousness"; and it was Hardy who first faced the problem squarely and boldly, and gave it a status and a name in contemporary English poetry. Dr. Chakravarty's critical analysis of *The Dynasts* is an adequate and admirable piece of work. His note on the influence of *The Dynasts* on modern poetic drama reveals a fine critical mind at work. Moving about the forest that is modern English poetry with ease and confidence, Dr. Chakravarty has produced a book that is both scholarly and stimulating.

One more Indo-Anglian critic deserves mention here : he is "K. S." who reviews current literature in *The Hindu*. "K. S." is, in fact, Professor K. Swaminathan of the Presidency College, Madras. His introduction to his abridged edition of Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay* is a thorough piece of work ; it gives one an idea of the kind of work he can do if he likes. But he is generally contented with reviewing criticism and poetry in the Sunday *Hindu*. "K. S." is fearless in his judgements, and his utterances are often magisterial and sometimes subtle ; but his critical subtleties are usually expressed with a commendable clarity. Occasionally he can be pompous and pontifical as in : "We have refrained from bespattering this notice with epithets of

indiscriminate laudation." His discovery of "echoes" anywhere and everywhere also becomes sometimes a vexatious affectation. But, on the whole, "K. S." is a very reliable critic and a very fastidious scholar—and a terror, more or less, to budding Indo-Anglian poets.

A few others might be mentioned and commented upon if space permitted, but they are not really so numerous as they should be.



## Chapter VIII

### ASSESSMENTS AND ANTICIPATIONS

What shall we say in retrospect about the achievements of the Indo-Anglians? From the preceding survey the optimist might well find grounds for envisaging a great future for Indo-Anglian literature. But this is linked with the question whether there is a future at all for the English language in India. If the Hindi-Hindustani movement succeeds, the importance of English will progressively lessen, and the Indo-Anglians will be left to plough a lonelier furrow than ever.

But it is just possible that the English language will remain current in India,—occupying a very important, if not the predominant, place—as long as English abides as a world language, the language of commerce and of cultural communication all over the world. Nobody, of course, will deny that everyone should study and cultivate one's own mother-tongue. But, to the present writer at any rate, it seems unlikely either that Hindi-Hindustani can ever become the national language in the dynamic sense of the term or that it can, for cultural purposes, take the place of English. After a taste of the munificence of the English language and literature for over four generations, it seems a short-sighted policy

to think of giving it all up on sentimental issues only. It should surely be possible to study and love English literature without in any way prejudicing our love for or service to our own mother-tongues.

Even supposing that English has a long lease of life in India, the absence of an organized book trade in our country seriously jeopardizes the work of the Indo-Anglians. We have few responsible and enterprising publishers, and few booksellers who know their business. Hence most Indo-Anglians turn publishers of their own books. The marketing of these books becomes consequently a *Pickwickian* business; indeed, few Indo-Anglians expect to make money out of their books, and hence they generally print only a few hundred copies, mainly for presentation purposes. Again, few newspapers and journals review new books promptly or properly. Even *The Hindu*, whose review columns rightly command great authority, often reviews books several months after their publication, in fact after interest in the books has all but ceased; many other papers do not review at all except in the most perfunctory manner. There are journals that wish neither to pay for the reviews nor to allow the reviewer to keep the book; hence they have hit on the novel expedient of asking publishers to send two copies of the book to be reviewed! Journals like *The Aryan Path*, *The Modern Review* and *The New Review* and the more important daily and weekly newspapers have competent and adequate reviewing staffs; but these are exceptions rather than the rule.

Lastly, few Indo-Anglian publications are given a chance to survive—their get-up is so execrable. As

Mr. J. C. Rollo has pointed out (though in a different connection) : " Many misprints.... The grimmest boards for cover. Non-opaque paper, so that every page is darkened by the print on the other side. Pages economically small-margined and unheaded, so that one looks instinctively for the numbered lines of a school text...." A book without "errata" is almost unthinkable in India. Yet, of late, some printing firms in India have been able to produce books beautifully and without blemish. One hopes that authors will henceforth attach due importance to the get-up of the books they wish to place on the market.

These, then, are the desiderata : a faith in the future of English as a cultural weapon of the first magnitude ; all-Indian organizations of authors, publishers, booksellers, and perhaps even authors' agents, to stimulate the production of books ; the organization of book-reviewing on much more rational lines than at present ; the maintenance of standards in the production of "books beautiful." When these are accomplished, we need not pity the tragedy of the Indo-Anglians, for the present tragedy will resolve itself in triumph ; and the future of Indo-Anglian literature, like the future of other Indian literatures, will be a sure progression from strength to strength.



## SUGGESTED READING LIST

### ( i ) General and Anthologies :—

Lotika Basu : *Indian Writers of English Verse.*  
Harhar Das : *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt.*  
T. O. D. Dunn : *A Bengali Book of English Verse.*  
Gwendoline Goodwin : *An Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry.*  
Margaret Macnicol : *Poems by Indian Women.*  
E. F. Oaten : *Anglo-Indian Literature : A Sketch.*  
Robert Sencourt : *India in English Literature.*  
P. Seshadri : *Anglo-Indian Poetry.*  
Bhupal Singh : *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction.*  
E. E. Speight : *Indian Masters of English.*

### ( ii ) Poetry :—

T. Baskar : *Passing Clouds.*  
V. N. Bhushan : *Enchantments ; Flute Tunes ; Footfalls ; Horizons ; Moonbeams ; Silhouettes ; Starfires.*  
Harindranath Chattopadhyaya : *Ancient Wings ; The Dark Well ; The Feast of Youth ; The Magic Tree ; The Perfume of Earth.*  
G. K. Chettur : *Gumataraya ; The Shadow of God ; The Temple Tank ; The Triumph of Love.*  
D. C. Datta : *Chandidas : Translations ; Christmas 1935 and Other Verses ; Exegi Monumentum and Lyrics ; Vidyapathi : Renderings in English Verse.*  
Nilima Devi : *Hidden Face.*  
Baldoon Dhingra : *Comes Ever the Dawn ; Mountains ; The Symphony of Peace.*

R. C. Dutt : *The Mahabharata and The Ramayana Condensed into English Verse.*

Toru Dutt : *Ancient Legends and Ballads of Hindustan; A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields.*

Joseph Furtado : *A Goan Fiddler; Songs in Exile.*

Aurobindo Ghose : *Collected Poems and Plays.*  
(2 Vols.)

Manmohan Ghose : *Love Songs and Elegies; Songs of Love and Death.*

Muhammad Iqbal : *Himalayan Mountain.*

Manjeri Isvaran : *Altar of Flowers; Brief Orisons; Catguts; Saffron and Gold.*

Sir Nizamat Jung : *Islamic Poems; Love's Withered Leaves; Sonnets and Other Poems.*

Humayun Kabir : *Poems.*

P. R. Kaikini : *The Recruit; Shanghai; The Snake in the Moon; Songs of a Wanderer; This Civilization.*

Ardeshir F. Khabardar : *The Silken Tassel.*

T. B. Krishnaswami : *Swallow Flights.*

Uma Maheswar : *Among the Silences; Awakened Asia; The Feast of the Crystal Heart; The Lay of the Lotus; Southern Idylls.*

Armando Menezes : *Chaos and Dancing Star; Chords and Discords; The Emigrant; The Fund: A Mock Epic.*

A. M. Modi : *Spring Blossoms.*

Sarojini Naidu : *The Bird of Time; The Broken Wing; The Golden Threshold.*

H. V. Nanjundayya : *Tears in the Night.*

Nagesh Wishwanath Pai : *The Angel of Misfortune.*

R. B. Paymaster : *Midnight and Dawn; Sunset and Sunrise; The Voice of the East on the Great War.*

M. Pithawalla : *Afternoons with Ahura Mazda; Mornings with Zoroaster; Sacred Sparks.*

K. P. Appaji Rao : *Dawn and Other Poems.*

B. Vasudeva Rao: *Of Here and Hereafter and Other Poems.*  
 V. Saranathan: *First Sheaves.*  
 Brajendranath Seal: *The Quest Eternal.*  
 P. Seshadri: *Bilhana; Champak Leaves; Sonnets; Vanishing Hours.*  
 K. D. Sethna: *Artist Love; The Secret Splendour.*  
 Ram Sharma: *Collected Poems.*  
 Rabindranath Tagore: *Collected Poems and Plays.*  
 Byram Talookdar: *Pianissimo.*  
 N. V. Thadani: *Krishna's Flute; Triumph of Delhi and Other Poems.*  
 K. S. Venkataramani: *On the Sand-dunes.*

( iii ) *Fiction and Drama :—*

Ahamed Ali: *Twilight in Delhi.*  
 Mulk Raj Anand: *Across the Black Waters; The Coolie; Two Leaves and a Bud; The Untouchable; The Village.*  
 A. S. P. Ayyar: *Baladitya; Indian After-Dinner Stories; Sense in Sex and Other Stories; Three Men of Destiny.*  
 Suryadutt Bhatt: *The Trial Celestial.*  
 D. M. Borgonkar: *The Image Breakers.*  
 Santa and Sita Chatterjee: *The Garden Creeper.*  
 Sita Chatterjee: *The Cage of Gold.*  
 G. K. Chettur: *The Ghost City and Other Stories.*  
 S. K. Chettur: *Bombay Murder; The Cobras of Dharmashevi.*  
 J. Chinnavadurai: *Sugirtha.*  
 V. V. Chintamani: *Vedantam.*  
 R. C. Dutt: *The Lake of Palms.*  
 Kumara Guru: *Life's Shadows.*  
 Muhammad Habib: *The Desecrated Bones and Other Stories.*  
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 V. V. Srinivasa Iyengar: *Dramatic Divertissements.*  
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D. F. Karaka : *Just Flesh.*  
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 Fyzee Rahamin : *Daughter of Ind.*  
 Shankar Ram : *The Children of the Kaveri; Creatures All; The Love of Dust.*  
 T. Ramakrishna : *The Dive for Death; Padmini.*  
 K. Raja Rao : *Kanthapura.*  
 Adi K. Sett: *Chameleons.*  
 Sir Jogendra Singh: *Kamala; Kamini; Nur Jehan.*  
 Cornelia Sorabji: *Between the Twilights; Sun-babies.*  
 Innocent Sousa : *Radha: A Hindu Belle.*  
 A. Subramanyam: *Indira Devi.*  
 Rabindranath Tagore: *Gora; The Home and the World; Hungry Stones and Other Stories; Mashi and Other Stories.*  
 Ramabhai Trikannad: *Victory of Faith and Other Stories.*  
 K. S. Venkataramani: *Jatadharan and Other Stories; Kandan the Patriot; Murugan the Tiller.*

(iv) *Miscellaneous Prose :—*

F. Correia Afonso: *Plain Living and Plain Thinking; The Spirit of Xavier.*  
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P. A. Wadia: *Mahatma Gandhi*.  
 Sophia Wadia: *The Brotherhood of Religions; Preparation for Citizenship*.

( v ) *Criticism* :—

A. S. P. Ayyar: *Bhasa*.  
 Amiya Chakravarty: *The Dynasts and the Post-war Age in Poetry*.  
 Baldoon Dhingra: *Genius and Artistic Enjoyment*.  
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 Nagendranath Gupta: *The Place of Man and Other Essays*.  
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